

# 15 Words 15c Farmer Classified Ads Phone 1208



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(Continued.)

"You're a stranger here. I should go as soon as you have sent help," said the girl.

"Mebby I better. I'll help get him up the hill and in the shade. Then I'll look it for the doc. If I don't come back after that," he said slowly, frowning. "It ain't because I'm scared of anything I done."

Far down in the valley Boyar's sweating sides glistened in the sun. An arm was raised in a gesture of farewell as the tramp swung the pony toward the town. Back to her surprise, Louise found herself waving a vigorous adieu to the distant figure.

The tramp Overland, realizing that the deputy was badly injured, told the first person he met about the accident, advising him to get help at once for the deputy. Then he turned the pony toward the foothills. In a clump of grasswood he dismounted and, leaving the reins hanging to the saddle horn, struck Black Boyar on the flank. The horse leaped toward the Moonstone trail. The tramp disappeared in the brush.

Louise Lacharme, more beautiful than roses, strolled across the vine shadowed porch of the big ranch house and sat on the porch rail opposite her uncle. His clear blue eyes twinkled approval as he gazed at her.

Walter Stone was fifty, but the fifty of the hand riding expert of the great outdoors. The smooth tan of his cheeks contrasted oddly with the silver of his close cropped hair. He appeared as a young man prematurely gray.

"How is Boyar?" he asked, smiling a little as Louise, sitting sideways on the porch rail, swung her foot back and forth quickly.

"Oh, Boy is all right. The tramp turned him loose in the valley. Boy came home."

"It was a clever bit of riding to get the best of Tanlow on his own range. Was Dick very badly hurt?" queried Walter Stone.

"Yes, his collarbone was broken, and the leg crushed and terribly bruised. His horse was killed. When I was alone day before yesterday the doctor said Dick would be all right in time."

"How about this boy, the tramp boy who arrested?"

"Oh," said Louise, "that was a shame. He stayed and helped the doctor put Dick in the buggy and rode with him to town. Mr. Tanlow was suspicious, and the boy had to go to jail all the time. Then the doctor explained it all at the scene, and they arrested him anyway as a suspicious character. I should have let him go. When Mr. Tanlow became conscious and they told him they had the boy he said to keep him in the calaboose, that that was where he belonged."

"And you want me to see what I can do for this boy?"

"I didn't say so," said Louise, tilted her chin.

"Now, sweetheart, don't quibble. It isn't like you."

The gray silk clad uncle flashed back and forth. "Really, Uncle Walter, you could have done something for the boy without making me say that I wanted you to. You've always doing something nice—helping people that are in trouble. You don't usually have to be asked."

"Perhaps I like to be asked-by—Katie."

"You're just flustering me, I know; but, uncle, if you had seen the boy jump in front of Mr. Tanlow's horse when Dick shot at the tramp and afterward when the boy helped me with Dick and steady right to him clear to his home—why, you couldn't help but admire him. Then they arrested him—for what? Why a shame! I told him to run when I saw the doctor's buggy coming."

"Yes, Louise, the boy may be brave and brave enough, but how are we to know what he really is? I don't like to take the risk. I don't like to meddle in such affairs."

"Uncle Walter! Right! And the risks you used to take when you were a young man! Oh, Aunt Eleanor has said me all about your riding bronchos and the Panhandle—and lots of things. I won't tell you all, for you'd be flattered to pieces, and I want you in one whole lump today."

"Only for today, Louise?"

"Oh, maybe for tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow; but, uncle, only last week you said at breakfast that the present system of arrest and imprisonment was all wrong. That was because they arrested that editor who was a friend of yours. But now when you have a chance to prove that you were in earnest you don't seem a bit interested."

"Did I really say all that, sweetheart?"

"Now you are quibbling. And does 'sweetheart' mean me or what you said at breakfast? Because you said the whole damned system, and there were no ladies at the table. Of course that was before breakfast. After breakfast you called a man for aunt and

kissed me."

Walter Stone laughed heartily. "But I do take a great deal of interest in anything that interests you."

Louise slipped lithely from the porch rail and swung up on the broad arm of his chair, snuggling against him impatiently. "I know you do, uncle. I just love you! I'll stop teasing."

"I surrender. I'm a pretty fair soldier at long range, but this—and his arm went round her affectionately—"this is utter defeat. I strike my colors. Then, you always give in so gracefully."

"To you, perhaps, Uncle Walter. But I haven't given in this time. I'm just as interested as ever."

"And you think they are the men we saw get on the Mojave by the water tank?"

"Oh, I know it! They remembered the rose. They spoke of it right away, before I did."

"Yes, Louise. And you remember, too, that they were arrested at Barstow—for murder, the conductor said?"

"That's just it! The boy Colie says the tramp Overland Red didn't kill the man. He was trying to save him and gave him water. If you could only hear what the boy says about it!"

"My heart, my service and my future are at your feet, Senorita Louise, my mouse. Are your eyes gray or green this morning?"

"Both," said Louise quickly. "Green for spunk and gray for love. That's what Aunt Eleanor says."

"Come a little nearer. Let me see. No, they are quite gray now."

"Cause why?" she cooed, and, stooping, kissed him with warm, careless affection. "You always ask me about my eyes when you want me to kiss you. Of course when you want to kiss me, why, you just come and take 'em."

"My esteemed privilege, sweetheart. I am your chaperon."

"Did Aunt Eleanor?" said Louise. But Walter Stone rose and straightened his shoulders. "That will do, mouse. I can't have any jealousy between my sweethearts."

"Never! And, Uncle Walter, do you want to ride Major or Rally? Rally and Boyar got along better together. I'll saddle Boy in a jiffy."

At the crossroads in the valley stood the local jail, or "coop," as it was more descriptively called. Unpainted, isolated, its solitary ugliness lacked even the squalid dignity commonly associated with the word "jail." The sun pelted down upon its bleached, unshaded roof and sides. The burning air ran over its warped shingles like a kind of colorless fire.

The boy Colie, half dreaming in the suffocating heat of the place, started to his feet as the door swung open. He had heard horses coming. They had stopped. He could hardly realize that the sunlight was swimming through the close dusk of the place. But the girl of Moonstone canyon, reining Boyar round, was real, and she smiled and nodded a greeting.

"This is Mr. Stone, my uncle," she said. "He wants to talk with you."

With a glance that noted each unwelcome detail of the place, the broken iron bed, the cracked pitcher and the unspeakable blankets, Louise touched her pony and was gone.

Colie rubbed his eyes, blinking in the sun as he stood gazing after her. Walter Stone, standing near the doorway, noted the lad's clear, healthy skin, his well shaped head with its tumble of wavy black hair and the luminous dark eyes. He felt an instant sympathy for the boy, a sympathy that he masked with a businesslike brusqueness. "Well, young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come outside. It's vile in there." Stone led his pony to the north side of the "coop."

Colie followed.

Away to the west he saw the hazy peaks. A lake of burning air pulsed above the flat, hot floor of the valley. Over there lay the hills and the shade and the road. Somewhere beyond was Overland, his friend, penniless, hunted, hungry.

"She bring you?" queried the boy.

"Yes. I have seen Tanlow, the sheriff. He's willing to let you go at my request. What do you intend doing now that you are free?"

"I don't know. Find Red, I guess." Walter Stone nodded.

"What then?"

"Oh, stick it out with Red. They'll be after him sure now. Red's my pal."

"What has he done to get the police after him?"

"Nothin'. It's the bunch."

"Uhh. Them guys out on the Mojave; but, say, are you workin' me to get next to Red and get him pinched again?"

"No. You don't have to answer me. This man Red is nothing to me one way or the other. He took Miss Lacharme's pony, but she has overlooked that. I thought perhaps you might care to explain your position. Perhaps you had rather not. You may go now if you wish."

"Is that straight?"

"Yes." For several tense seconds the lad gazed at his questioner. Finally his gaze shifted to the hills and then back to Stone.

"I guess I'll have to tell you the whole thing straight. Red always said that to tell the truth was just as good as lying, because nobody would believe us anyway. And if a fella gets caught tellin' the truth—why, he's that much to the good."

"Well, I shall try and believe you this time," said Stone. "Miss Lacharme thinks you're honest."

"A guy couldn't lie to her!" said the boy.

"Then just consider me her representative," said Stone, smiling.

**CHAPTER VI.**  
The Girl Who Glanced Back.

COLIE squatted in the meager shade of the "coop." Walter Stone, dropping the pony's reins, came and sat beside the lad.

There was something in the older man's presence, an unspoken assurance of comradeship and sincerity, that annulled the boy's tendency to reticence about himself. He began hesitatingly: "My dad was a drinkin' man. Ma died, and he got worse at it. I was a kid and didn't care, for he never done nothin' to me. We lived back east over a pawnbroker's on Main street. One day pa come home with a timetable. He sat up most all night readin' it. Every time I woke up he was readin' it and talkin' to himself. That was after ma died."

"In the mornin', when I was gettin' dressed, he come over and says to take the needle he had and stick it through the time table anywhere. I was scared he was goin' to have the timmies. But I took the needle—it had black thread in it—and stuck it through the time table. He opened the page and laugh-

ed. He said, 'That was after ma died.'"

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"Is that straight?"

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